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How To Use Nonverbal Communication To Impress Others

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Knowing how to use nonverbal communication to impress others is crucial in making a good first impression. Are you prepared to present a positive image? Nonverbal communication speaks volumes during any exchange between two or more people. What you don't say really does matter - more so than your spoken words. Being aware of what you are communicating nonverbally can give you an advantage that will ensure that every first impression is good. Do you know how to use nonverbal communication to impress others?

Some nonverbal behaviors should be avoided when trying to impress others. They are generally considered to reflect a domineering attitude and should be avoided, especially during a first encounter where you are trying to make a good impression.

Domineering Nonverbal Communication

- Speaking in a voice that is unusually loud or overly soft with carefully enunciated words
- Choosing to sit in a chair with the back facing your companion, your legs straddling the seat
- Keeping your hands clasped behind your back
- Tilting your head upward so that your chin is slightly elevated
- Prolonged eye contact
- Grasping the lapels of your jacket
- Assuming a different posture than others in your group. For example, standing while everyone else sits or choosing a seat that elevates you above others in your group

Quelling a trembling hand and drying sweaty palms before shaking hands are small actions that speak volumes. These actions are considered a sign of anxiety. Different levels of anxiety will cause you to display various actions:

Lower Level Anxiety Nonverbal Communication

- Sighing repeatedly
- Sweaty palms
- Fidgeting, like bouncing a foot while your legs are crossed
- Picking at fingernails or skin
- Inability to maintain eye contact
- Clearing your throat
- Inappropriate laughter during a conversation
- Clenching your jaw
- Clenching your fists
- Repeatedly adjusting your clothing or jewelry
- Touching your face or hair
- Sitting with a rigid posture
- Rapid body movements like jumping up from your chair to shake your companion's hand
- Drumming your fingers on the table

Higher Level Anxiety Nonverbal Communication

- Trembling hands, knees or lips
- Shifting your gaze, unable to focus on any object for more than a few seconds
- Wringing your hands
- Speaking with a strained or quivering voice
- Rapid or heavy breathing

Some nonverbal communication evokes boredom with the person or his or her conversation, whether you mean it or not. The following are some nonverbal actions that you will want to keep in check when trying to make a good first impression:

Actions That Express Aloofness, Boredom or Indifference

- Lack of eye contact
- Yawning
- Not looking at someone while he or she is speaking
- Tapping your fingers or a pen on the table
- Staring off into space during a conversation
- Holding up your head with your hand
- Slouching in your chair
- Watching the clock
- Watching the exit door
- Periods of fidgeting
- Checking your purse or cell phone during a conversation
- Watching other people in the room during a conversation

The following nonverbal communication cues make a good impression during an initial meeting and can be either acted out naturally or staged to create a positive image.

Nonverbal Communication That Expresses Self-Confidence

- Initiating a handshake
- Having a firm grip during a handshake
- Eye contact
- Straight, yet relaxed posture
- Removing or unbuttoning your jacket
- Keeping your hands visible, away from your face, often with the palms up
- Genuine smile
- Listening during the conversation while not appearing too eager to speak

Nonverbal Communication Cues That Show Interest

- Leaning slightly forward, toward the person speaking
- Placing a lightly closed fist under the chin
- Taking notes
- Tilting your head
- Slightly squinting
- Placing a hand on the table with your open fingers toward the speaker
- Continued eye contact

While knowing the nonverbal communication cues that present a positive impression, it is also important to understand a few gestures that are often perceived as personal or flirtatious. These cues can ruin a professional meeting if used inappropriately or propel a personal relationship such as a first date.

Nonverbal Gestures of Affection or Romantic Interest

- Placing a hand on the small of the back or around the waist
- Standing closer than twelve inches in proximity to another person
- Grooming gestures, such as picking off lint or straightening your clothes and hair
- Stroking your own arms or legs during conversation
- Twirling hair around your finger
- Licking your lips

It is also important to consider that there are many cultural differences that affect nonverbal communication. Some cultures consider it a serious offense to touch a stranger while others consider it an act of welcome to greet a stranger with a kiss. Committing a social faux pas without being aware of cultural differences could spell disaster for your meeting. If your meeting will consist of persons who have a cultural background that is different from your own, take the time to research nonverbal traditions specific for their culture before your meeting. Showing knowledge of a foreigner's culture and respecting those differences will speak volumes to your companion, without saying a word.

Taking the time to understand how to use nonverbal communication to impress others also helps you better understand the nonverbal language of those around you. Watch the nonverbal communication between couples at the mall, mothers at the playground and colleagues in the office. By observing others, you will become more proficient at reading nonverbal cues and more aware of your own nonverbal communication. You may find that the coworker you thought disliked you is reacting to nonverbal communication cues that you exhibit during your conversations. By consciously changing your nonverbal cues, you can bridge relational gaps and open the door to honest, friendly verbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is an important and complex aspect of social interaction in all cultures, among all ages. Understanding how nonverbal communication affects you and those you interact with can open up possibilities at home, at work and in your community. These basic principles regarding how to use nonverbal communication to impress others are the beginning of an understanding of the diverse complexities of nonverbal communication. Researching deeper into the aspects of nonverbal communication can be a greatly rewarding experience and applying these principles can enrich your relationships both socially and professionally.

Do You Make a Good First Impression?

As the old saying goes, you can't judge a book by its cover...but people do it all the time! Sure, it's unfair, but first impressions can haunt you forever. Like it or not, your attitude, appearance and overall demeanor say a lot about you. What is yours saying? Find out if you make a good first impression with this quiz.

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